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Transgender awareness leader speaks at UMaine

Father of transgendered child talks about struggles faced

By Eric Berard
For The Maine Campus

Wayne M. Maines, director of safety and environmental management at the University of Maine gave an emotional presentation on Wednesday afternoon as part of the spring 2013 lunch series hosted by the Women's Studies program. His child, Nicole, is a transgender girl who has become a symbol for transgender justice in the state of Maine. Maines explained his family's journey and how the experience of press, bullying, parenting, and the court have changed his views.

"Look at this family, it's an all American photo, Maines said as he displays a photo of his family to the audience.

"The reason I'm here today is because there's kids all over the nation that are not going to be fine, Maines said.

Nicole was featured in several news stories across the state from 2007 until 2012 after parents of other students complained to Orono Elementary of Nicole using the bathroom as a transgender girl when she was in fifth grade. Maines said that's when the bullying started. Maines gave recognition to the LGBT community early in his presentation for helping him and his family.

"The people who I wrote to were all the national LGBT organizations in the country and I said 'I do not know what to do'. They came to our aid, I would not be speak here today if the LGBT community did not step up to the plate and help my family," Maines said.

Maines showed a video of his daughter Nicole, giving a speech in Washington D.C. last summer. The video shows Nicole at fourteen years old as she explains that she was born a boy but has always known she was a girl. She continued, saying her friends were happy for her and that she was happy to be her real self. In the video, Nicole appears professional and confident and said one day, everything changed.

"Anybody here married? Is marriage easy? Add a transgender child, add getting on the front page of the newspaper, and add having an ex-NRA husband," Maines said.

The Maines family has been heavily attached to transgender justice. Maines has spoken with Senator Olympia Snowe and Senator Susan Collins and congresswoman Chellie Pingree when he and his family went to Washington D.C. According to Maines, all of them could not believe this was happening in Orono Maine. Maines felt confused

with the Student Non-Discrimination Act. This act was made to protect LGBT students against bullying and discrimination in school.

"I'm amazingly supportive of this act but I don't understand why we even need a to have it. I thought all kids already had the same rights as everybody else in school," Maines said.

Maines gave some history for his experience in the Maine courts. In 2009, he and his family won a Maine Human Rights Commission case. Then, when Nicole was in 5th grade, the school decided to try again with the Maine Human Rights Commission and again they won telling Maines and his family that gender identity and gender expression is a protected class in the state of Maine. However, nothing changed according to Maines, and they brought the case to the Maine superior court. On Transgender Remembrance Day (November 20th, 2012) the judge ruled against them. Currently, Maines is still fighting for transgender justice in the Maine law court, the states highest court.

"We thought we had an opportunity to have the Orono school system show the state and maybe the rest of the nation that this can work," Maines said.
